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ABSTRACT

A 15-year study of Amish schools in the United States and Canada found that the number of Amish schools has grown dramatically from 1940 through the present. The Amish provide formal schooling only up to the eighth grade, after which adolescents are engaged in mastering a trade before entering into adulthood. The Amish once supported public schools, but when compulsory attendance beyond grade eight was enforced and consolidation required busing students to schools outside the community, the Amish resisted and started their own schools. Public school officials did not want to recognize Amish schools, which resulted in conflicts in several states. The Supreme Court ruled in 1972 that Amish children could not be forced to attend public schools beyond eighth grade. The Amish have significant impacts on rural education in 22 states and the province of Ontario. The Amish add cultural diversity to rural areas and they affect public school attendance and size by not participating. They preserve a part of rural public school history by buying public one-room schools and equipment, they preserve the one-teacher method of teaching, and they preserve an organizational oversight system through school boards for each school similar to that utilized by country schools of earlier decades. Twenty-five tables present numbers of Amish schools in 22 states and Ontario, numbers of Amish schools in the United States, and schools and communities visited. (Contains 25 references.) (TD)

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Amish Schools in the United States and Canada

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Amish Schools in the United States and Canada

Introduction

Previous researchers such as Hostetler and Huntington (1992), Hostetler (1993), Fisher and Stahl (1986), Fishman (1988), Kraybill (1993) and Nolt (1992) have documented various aspects of Amish education. Others such as Sherman (1998) and Hepler (1993) have documented historic country schools in Iowa and West Virginia respectively, while Fuller (1982), Grove (2000), Gulliford (1991) and Swanson (1976) have focused on country schools in a broader context. Amish writers such as Lapp (1991) and Miller (1995) have focused on Amish schools at the local or state level.

It is the intent of this descriptive research project is to document the growth in the number of Amish schools in the United States and Canada. The research is significant because there is little information on the number of Amish schools in operation in the current statistical literature, educational research journals and in the popular press. For example, at the federal level, the Center for Education Statistics (Snyder, 1987) & (Snyder & Huffman, 1995) collects information on the number of one-teacher schools but no data on private schools. At the state level there is little information on the number of private schools and even less on rural private schools. Finally, Hughes (1986) predicted the demise of the one-teacher school. While it is true that the number of public one-room schools is declining, the total number of private one-room schools is increasing (Dewalt, 1989 & 1997). A large part of this increase is due to the growth of Amish schools, many of which are one-room schools, as documented in this report.

This project will also illustrate how the Amish are in fact preserving some of the buildings, curriculum, and teaching techniques of America's country schools of the early 1900's. The research will also dispel one common misperception about the Amish, that they do not value

education for their children. While it is true that most Amish children do not attend formal school after eighth grade, the Amish do expect their children to master core subjects in grades one – eight. For example, in most Amish schools in Holmes County, Ohio the children study arithmetic, English, German, reading, spelling, geography, vocabulary, and composition (Kinney, 1996, p. 134). In addition, both Luthy (1986) and Lapp (1991) chronicle the involvement of Amish people in German schools, Sunday schools, precursors to public schools, and public schools during the last two centuries.

Methodology and Data Sources

Information for this project has been collected over a span of over fifteen years. The researcher has used a variety of sources to gather data for this project. This has included national surveys, review of data sources, site visits, interviews of agricultural agents that serve rural areas inhabited by the Amish, and interviews of Amish school committee members in various states. National surveys to each state Department of Education were conducted in 1989 and 1997 to document the number of public and private one-room schools in each state. These surveys were an incomplete data source for Amish schools. More reliable data sources in rank order of use in this project included the following publications: The Blackboard Bulletin (staff, 1999), The Amish in America: Settlements that Failed, 1840 – 1960 (Luthy, 1986), The Indiana Amish Directory (Miller, 1995), and Pennsylvania School History 1690 – 1990, (Lapp, 1986). To confirm the national surveys and published data, the researcher visited Amish schools and communities in Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, Indiana, Iowa, and Tennessee. Table 25 lists communities visited and dates of those visits. In addition, the researcher conducted interviews with Amish school committee members (state level) and Amish school committee members at the local level. Finally, the researcher interviewed reporters that have published popular press articles on Amish and/or one-room schools. All of these data sources serve to

increase the reliability of the number of schools documented. It should be noted that all data contained in this report is as close to the exact number of schools as can be determined by the sources utilized. It would not be possible to verify every school in every Amish community without a visit to each community. And even if that were possible, one might easily miss a school located in an isolated rural area. Finally, it should be noted that Old Order Mennonite schools are not included in this project.

Results

The school built circa 1900 is nestled on a wedge of land between two dirt roads. This white clapboard building, which serves 25 Amish children in grades one - eight, has a combination wood/coal stove, unpainted wood floors, wall hooks on which to hang coats, and four sets of large single pane windows on each side of the school. The unheated side porch serves as a site to place personal belongings such as boots and lunch pails. Four rows of desks face the front of the classroom and the teacher's desk. There are no tape recorders, overhead projectors, VCR's, TV's, or computers. The one-room school has no electricity. In front of the building is a field for recess and baseball. The baseball field is abuzz with activity each Wednesday evening during the summer months.

Most of the public would assume that the above is a historical portrayal of a one-room school of the 1920's. It is quite the opposite. It is a description of an Amish school in Holmes County Ohio, the date – June 2000. The school is similar in both structure and instruction to that of many public one-room schools in the United States in the early 1900's. In fact, the structure was originally built and utilized as a public one-room school.

The Origin of Amish Schools

Lapp (1991, p. 128) indicates that while the Amish were involved with German schools prior to 1924, the primary purpose of these schools was religious in nature. These German

schools were not designed to replace the role of public schools. However, conditions in Delaware in 1924 initiated discussions in the Amish community about how to best address the needs of Amish children as well as the Amish community.

Lapp (1991, p. 126-127) notes that these discussions eventually led to the first Amish school in the United States: Apple Grove Mennonite Private School located near Dover, Delaware. The school opened its doors in January of 1925. There were two main reasons that the Amish decided to start this school. First, the state of Delaware decided to reduce the number of public one-room schools, and to limit existing one-rooms schools to grades 1 – 6. Seventh and eighth grade students would now be sent to consolidated schools. Second, Amish migration into Delaware had dramatically increased the number of children attending Rose Valley School. Since the public school officials were not interested in adding a room to this school to relieve crowding, the Amish decided to build their own school in response to the above happenings. Construction of this school began in October of 1924 under the direction of Jonathan Beiler, head carpenter. Members of the community volunteered much of the labor required to build the school.

Amish Schools by State

Amish schools first appeared in Delaware in 1925, Pennsylvania in 1938, Ohio in 1944, Tennessee in 1945 and Ontario, Canada in 1953. As of the 1999-2000 school year there were 1,139 Amish schools in the United States and 30 in Canada. Many are similar in structure and curriculum to the school described previously. The states with the largest number of schools were Pennsylvania with 326 schools, Ohio with 237 schools, and Indiana with 133 schools.

While there were several Amish communities in Arkansas prior to 1940 (Luthy, 1986), the first school did not appear until 1950 (Kraybill, 1993). The longevity of this school is in question because an ending date is not listed in any of the sources reviewed. Table 1 illustrates

the number of schools in Delaware. One of the first Amish schools to appear in the United States was in Kent County Delaware in 1925. About half of the current schools in Delaware are one-teacher schools. Table 2 outlines the number of Amish schools in Illinois. Most of the Amish schools are located in Moultrie County. About half of the schools in Illinois are one-teacher schools. Table 3 lists the number of Amish schools in Indiana. Two teachers serve a majority of Amish schools in Indiana. It is interesting to note that some of the newer schools in the Elkhart/LaGrange area will have an apartment for the teacher located above the school. This has become necessary to attract teachers to the community from other states or Canada. The public school and college interest in basketball in Indiana has rubbed off on the Amish; many of the Amish schools in the Elkhart/Lagrange area will have a basketball goal on the playground.

Table 4 outlines the number of Amish Schools in Iowa. Iowa was the center of a statewide controversy in the fall of 1965 that centered on the right of the Amish to have their own schools (Kraybill, 1986). The story broke onto the national scene on November 19th of that year when a photographer snapped a picture of Amish children running into a cornfield when public school officials attempted to make the children board a school bus to transport them to a public school. The photograph was circulated around the state and nation and some believe that this galvanized support for the Amish people by Americans living in other states. The issue was not resolved until 1967 when the governor and legislators voted to allow religious groups to seek exemption from state standards. As one can see from Table 4, the number of Amish schools in Iowa increased rapidly after 1967. Amish Schools are now found in eight counties in Iowa. About half of the schools in Iowa will be one-teacher schools. Some of the schools in Iowa will have a vacation week for the corn harvest, which usually occurs in October.

Kentucky is home to 34 Amish schools in 11 counties with the first school in this state begun around 1970 (see table 6). About half of the schools in this state will be one-teacher

schools. Maryland is home to six Amish schools all of which are one-teacher schools (see Table 7). All of the schools are located in St. Mary's County.

Table 8 outlines the growth of Amish schools in Michigan. The first school did not appear in Michigan until about 1974, that number ballooned to 67 schools in the year 2000. This is an increase of 66 schools in 25 years. Amish schools will be found in 19 counties in this state with the majority of schools having one-teacher. The Amish also began their first school in Minnesota around 1974 (see Table 9). There are now 22 Amish schools in five counties in Minnesota. All the schools in Minnesota are one-teacher schools. Luthy (1986) reports that Mississippi was home to one of the earliest Amish schools, the Amish community in Lumberton began a school i 1929. This community became extinct as of 1948. A more recent school was begun in 1996 (see Table 10).

Missouri is home to 55 Amish schools with the earliest school begun around 1948 (see Table 11). About half of the schools in Missouri will be served by one-teacher. A small group of Amish migrated to Pawnee County, Nebraska in 1978 (Kraybill, 1993). The group did establish a school, but because of a conflict over certification of teachers, the group left the state in 1982.

Forty-nine Amish schools are located in the state of New York with most of the schools being a one-teacher school (see Table 13). The first school appeared around 1950. Amish schools are located in nine counties in New York.

North Carolina is home to one Amish school, which was started around 1985. The school is served by two teachers and is housed in mobile units, which are connected by an enclosed walkway. Some of the students at this school ride horses to school each day. Luthy (1986, p. 299-300) reports that an earlier Amish community in Moyock, NC organized a school for the

1925-26 school year. A hotel was built to house Amish settlers in this area and school was held on the second floor of this hotel.

The world's largest Amish community is located in the Holmes/Wayne County area of Ohio, and the area is home to the first two Amish schools in Ohio. The names of the schools were Maple Grove School and Fountain Nook School, and both of these schools began operation in the fall of 1944 (Hershberger, 1985). Each of the schools are still in operation and they are both located in Wayne County. Fountain Nook School gets its name from the bubbling spring on the property.

Schools in the Holmes and Wayne county environs include all wood structures, yellow brick structures, and wood frame schools with vinyl siding. Table 15 illustrates the rapid growth of the number of schools in this state. In Ohio, the increase was from 86 schools in 1975 to 237 in the 1999-2000 school year, which was an increase of 151 schools in 25 years. Two teachers will serve most of the Amish schools in Ohio, and many of the newer schools will include a basement. Most of the schools in Ohio are similar to the traditional country school in both architecture and teaching methods utilized.

Pennsylvania is home to the most well known Amish community in the world - Lancaster County and vicinity. Pennsylvania has the largest number of Amish schools in the Untied States (see table 17). As of the year 2000 there were 326 Amish schools in Pennsylvania. A large majority of these were one-teacher schools. The first Amish school was established in 1938 and as of the year 2000, Amish schools are found in 31 counties of Pennsylvania. One of the most conservative groups of Amish live in Mifflin County (Big Valley) Pennsylvania, their schools are generally smaller in stature to those in other communities and the schools are devoid of any visible exterior ornamentation. In contrast, most Amish schools in the Lancaster County environs will be well maintained and have well manicured grounds.

As of 2000 there were 17 Amish schools in Tennessee (see Table 18). Most of the schools in Tennessee are one-teacher schools and are located in the countryside north of Etheridge. The Amish in this area are famous for their homemade peanut brittle.

Since 1975 the Amish have migrated to Kansas (Table 5), Montana (Table 12), Oklahoma (Table 16), Virginia (Table 19), Washington (Table 20) and West Virginia (Table 21). Schools have been established in all of these states.

As of 2000, there were 99 Amish schools in Wisconsin (see Table 22). Most of these schools have been in existence since 1975. Amish schools can be found in 17 counties in Wisconsin. Most of the Amish schools in this state will be one-teacher schools. Wisconsin is home to the dispute that eventually resulted in the Supreme Court decision of Wisconsin v. Yoder, 1972. This decision gave the Amish freedom to maintain their own schools and to limit school-based formal education to eight grades.

Table 23 gives a summary of Amish schools in Ontario, Canada. The first Amish school appeared in Canada around 1954. As of the year 2000 there were 30 Amish schools in Ontario. It is interesting to note that the Blackboard Bulletin, a booklet for Amish teachers in the United States and Canada, is printed in Aylmer, Ontario. This booklet is published ten times per year and has a variety of articles on teaching.

Table 24 is a summary of the number of Amish schools in the United States. As one can see, the number of Amish schools has increased in each five-year time period beginning in 1925. Furthermore the increase has been rather dramatic, for example in most ten-year intervals the number of Amish schools doubles. And if the number does not double, the increase is still substantial. For example, from 1990 – 2000 the number of Amish schools increased from 708 to 1140, an increase of 432 schools.

The number of states that have seen the presence of their first Amish school since 1990 illustrates migration patterns of the Amish. The Amish will usually migrate to a rural area that has plenty of farmland for sale.

Discussion

Table 24 illustrates that the number of Amish schools has doubled in each of the decades from 1940 to 1980. The decades after 1980, while still having a large increase in the number of schools did not have a doubling of schools. This is most likely due to the fact that in the decades leading up to 1980, the number of schools was influenced by that fact that some Amish children were still attending public schools. As these children left for the private schools the numbers of schools needed would rise. One would surmise that after 1980 there were fewer Amish children left in public school and thus the rise in the number of Amish schools would be due to population and migration trends only.

Some would ask, "Why do the Amish, a very frugal people, go through the time, effort and expense to provide their own schools when their children could receive a free public education?" Others would ask, "Why are the number of Amish schools increasing so rapidly?" To answer these questions, one must understand the Amish culture and the nature of a society based on agriculture. Hostetler (1993) indicated that the Amish supported the rural public schools until two key factors came into being: 1) compulsory attendance beyond grade 8 and 2) busing students to a school outside the community. As long as the school was a one-room structure in the local community, the Amish could tolerate some modern conveniences in the one-room school. For example, Fisher (1978) reports that in 1880 the Lancaster County township of Leacock had a school board composed of a Mennonite man, one Amish man, and a man from an "English denomination." These men oversaw a township composed of eleven schoolhouses that served plain and non-plain children in the same schools. As public schools

began to consolidate and compulsory attendance laws began to be enforced the Amish began to resist efforts to make them comply. On some occasions this resulted in fathers being jailed for failure to send their children to school. The Amish thus began to form their own schools. This did not automatically solve the situation because public school officials did not want to recognize the Amish schools. This resulted in conflicts in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Iowa and Wisconsin. Eventually, the Supreme Court ruled in Wisconsin v. Yoder 1972, that Amish children could not be forced to attend public school beyond eighth grade. The recent news reports of school shootings and drug arrests in public schools have only served to cement the Amish belief in providing schools for their children. The Amish expect their children to learn to read and write. They also expect them value manual labor. They thus provide formal schooling up until the eighth grade. After this, adolescents will be engaged in mastering a trade before entering into adulthood.

Having an accurate picture of the number of Amish schools is important because the Amish add to the cultural diversity of rural areas. As the data indicate, Amish schools are becoming more prevalent each year and have a significant impact on rural education in twenty-two states and the province of Ontario. One impact of these numbers is that public schools in the Amish areas will have fewer students than they would if the Amish chose public education. Another important impact is that Amish schools also serve to preserve a part of rural public school history. This is true in four distinct ways, first the Amish will sometimes buy public one-room schools to use as schools; this fact serves to preserve the buildings. Secondly, the Amish will often purchase old desks, furniture and textbooks used in rural public schools. This will serve to save many of these items from the local solid waste facility. The third way that the Amish preserve the rural legacy is that the Amish schools also preserve a method of teaching that was an integral part of rural education in the United States in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

Finally, current Amish schools preserve on organizational oversight system through school boards for each school similar to that utilized by country schools of earlier decades. For example, Fuller (1982) describes the educational role and responsibilities of farmers in the Middle Border states in the 1880's – 1900's. The description is very similar to the role each Amish community must take in building and maintaining a school in their area.

Amish leaders do struggle with curricular issues, as do the public schools. For example, Amish leaders are concerned about having employment for their young adults, especially in areas where farmland is hard to obtain. Currently, the Amish seem to do a good job of preparing their children for traditional rural occupations, manual trades, farming related manufacturing, and running small businesses. How the Amish cope with changing economic conditions will have some effect on the vitality of Amish communities and thus the number of Amish schools in operation in the future. Based on the data collected, this author believes that the number of Amish schools will continue to increase in the foreseeable future.

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Table 1
Number of Amish Schools in Delaware by Date of Origin, Listed in Five Year Intervals

Year	Frequency
1925	1
1930	2
1935	2
1940	2
1945	2
1950	2
1955	2
1960	2
1965	2
1970	5
1975	5
1980	7
1985	10
1990	10
1995	10
2000	10

Table 2
Number of Amish Schools in Illinois and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1970	4
1975	5
1980	6
1985	9
1990	12
1995	19
2000	25

Table 3
Number of Amish Schools in Indiana and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1950	1
1955	2
1960	5
1965	16
1970	46
1975	53
1980	57
1985	63
1990	75
1995	104
2000	133

Table 4
Number of Amish Schools in Iowa and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1950	2
1955	2
1960	2
1965	2
1970	7
1975	14
1980	20
1985	23
1990	25
1995	32
2000	42

Table 5
Number of Amish Schools in Kansas and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1995	2
2000	2

Table 6
Number of Amish Schools in Kentucky and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1970	1
1975	1
1980	4
1985	4
1990	14
1995	27
2000	34

as of 1990 data includes 2 schools that have no known date of origin.

Table 7
Number of Amish Schools in Maryland and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1970	3
1975	3
1980	5
1985	5
1990	6
1995	5
2000	6

Table 8
Number of Amish Schools in Michigan and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1975	3
1980	6
1985	16
1990	32
1995	55
2000	67

as of 1990 data includes 11 schools that have no known date of origin.

Table 9
Number of Amish Schools in Minnesota and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1975	1
1980	7
1985	10
1990	12
1995	16
2000	22

as of 1990 data includes 1 school that has no known date of origin.

Table 10
Number of Amish Schools in Mississippi and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1929	1*
1996	1
2000	1

* this community was in existence from 1929-1948, how long the school was in operation is not known from sources utilized.

Table 11
Number of Amish Schools in Missouri and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1950	3
1955	3
1960	7
1965	9
1970	15
1975	17
1980	24
1985	27
1990	34
1995	39
2000	55

as of 1990 data includes 1 school that has no known date of origin

Table 12
Number of Amish Schools in Montana and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1975	1
1980	1
1985	1
1990	1
1995	2
2000	4

as of 1990 data includes 1 school that has no known date of origin

Table 13
Number of Amish Schools in New York and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1950	1
1955	1
1960	1
1965	1
1970	1
1975	3
1980	11
1985	26
1990	28
1995	41
2000	49

as of 1980 data includes 5 schools that have no known date of origin
as of 1985 data includes 6 additional schools with no known date of origin

Table 14
Number of Amish Schools in North Carolina and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1925	1*
1985	1
1990	1
1995	1
2000	1

* Moyock, NC – this school was in existence for one year (Luthy, 1986)

Table 15
Number of Amish Schools in Ohio and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1945	2
1950	4
1955	13
1960	36
1965	54
1970	69
1975	86
1980	116
1985	136
1990	153
1995	182
2000	237

Table 16
Number of Amish Schools in Oklahoma and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1990	1
1995	2
2000	2

Table 17
Number of Amish Schools in Pennsylvania and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1940	2
1945	2
1950	5
1955	18
1960	32
1965	44
1970	87
1975	115
1980	145
1985	168
1990	248
1995	279
2000	326

as of 1990 data includes 24 schools that have no known date of origin.

Table 18
Number of Amish Schools in Tennessee and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1945	1
1950	3
1955	3
1960	2
1965	3
1970	4
1975	5
1980	6
1985	7
1990	10
1995	12
2000	17

as of 1990 data includes 2 schools that have no known date of origin
1950 and 1955 data includes one school in an Amish community that became extinct in 1956

Table 19
Number of Amish Schools in Virginia and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1995	4
2000	4

Table 20
Number of Amish Schools in Washington and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1999	1
2000	1

Table 21
Number of Amish Schools in West Virginia and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
2000	2

Table 22
Number of Amish Schools in Wisconsin and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1960	2
1965	2
1970	6
1975	10
1980	18
1985	28
1990	45
1995	81
2000	99

as of 1990 data includes 4 schools that have no known date of origin.

Table 23
Number of Amish Schools in Ontario, Canada and Date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1954	1
1960	2
1965	4
1970	10
1975	14
1980	19
1985	20
1990	21
1995	24
2000	30

Table 24
Number of Amish Schools in the United States by date of Origin

Year	Frequency
1925	2
1930	3
1935	3
1940	5
1945	8
1950	19
1955	42
1960	88
1965	132
1970	247
1975	319
1980	423
1985	514
1990	708
1995	914
2000	1139

Table 25
Schools and Communities Visited by Date and State

Community	States	Dates Visited
Elkhart/Legrange	Indiana	April, 1997
Hazleton	Iowa	October, 2000
Union Grove	North Carolina	January, 1991 & January 2001
Holmes/Wayne County	Ohio	July, 1991: April, 1997; July, 1998; & June 2000
Lancaster County	Pennsylvania	Research conducted in this community at least once each year since 1984
Mifflin County	Pennsylvania	July, 1988; & July, 2000
Shippensburg	Pennsylvania	July, 1997; & July 1998
Snyder/Union	Pennsylvania	Many visits between 1986 and 1990; & October, 1996
Etheridge	Tennessee	April 1998

Conversations with Amish School leaders were conducted in January, 1991; June, 1997; April, 1998; & June, 2000.